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## THE HYPNOTISM OF PAUL TILLIER

BY HILLARY BELL

*With original illustrations by Paul Tillier.*

How shall we classify Paul Tillier? He is French to the core; yet he continually declares, like the juvenile monopolist of the apple, that "there ain't goin' to be no core." There is an invariable note of insincerity in him. He does everything by turns and nothing ill, yet nothing with exactness. His method is at once true and slipshod. His conceptions are generally vigorous, their execution is often indifferent. He goes from ambition to lassitude without pausing on the level of honest purpose.

He is a chameleon of the studio, that reflects every phase of fancy with quick aptitude, yet without permanency. His facility is astonishing, his imagination lively, his technique brilliant, his color delightful. He has the gayety of youth with the command of age, and he unites the grace of the gentler sex with the power of his own.

From qualities of this varied and unusual wealth we might reasonably expect remarkable achievements; but Tillier no sooner earns our applause than he makes haste to prove how little he cares for it, and, after having charmed, he proceeds to disappoint us. He is a type of Parisian art and frivolity. He plays at life, and executes capers to declare his agility. He is at once bizarre and academic, con-

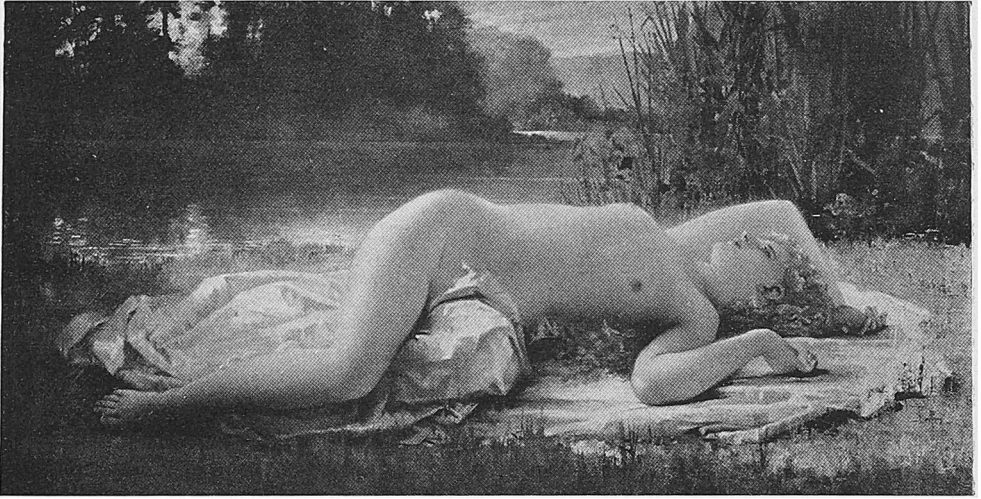


THE LADY ON THE BACK OF A WINGED LION



THE LADY IN TULLE

scientious and careless, a realist and a romanticist, a poet and a sensualist. To one idea only is he true ; and in the reproductions of his works, herewith pre-



THE LADY OF THE LAKE

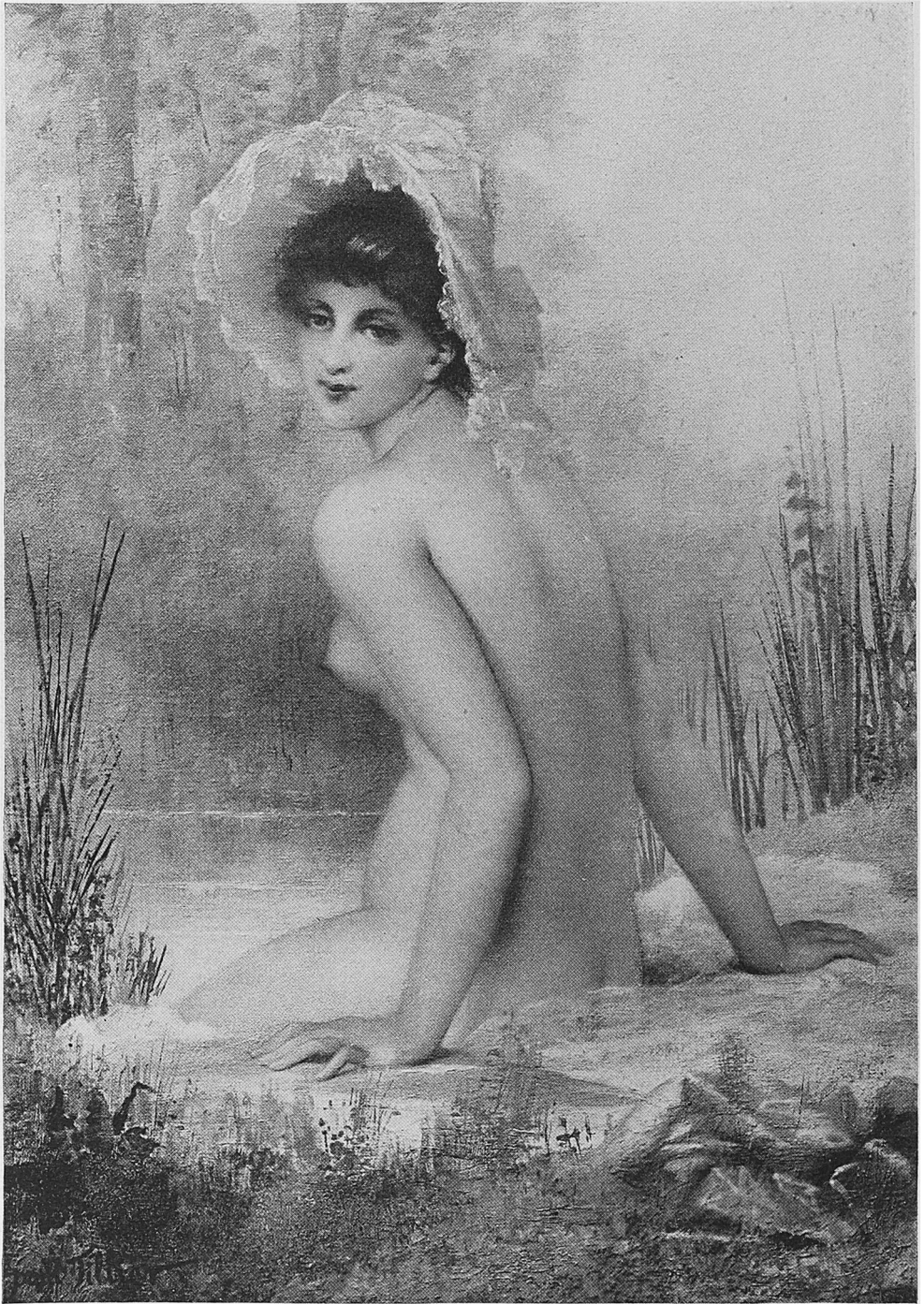
sented, we find him fickle in everything except the belief that there is no such thing as virtue in womanhood.

It is perhaps this misconception of human nature that has introduced the discordant note into his compositions. We may not, indeed, apply Dr. Johnson's argument to the studio, by affirming that he who paints good women must himself be good. Yet a study of Tillier's pictures easily inclines us to the theory that, if this artist had more faith in femininity, he might depict its graces with greater completeness.

This is no reflection on the character of the gifted Frenchman. No doubt in his habit, as he lives, M. Tillier is an example of moral rectitude. But he has been misled by his models. These were evidently very alluring young persons. Beyond peradventure, they were of the *Mrs. Tanqueray* rather than the *Trilby* order. In their visible presentment, admirably illustrated by these paintings, we observe the encouraging spectacle of a man of naturally fine sentiment endeavoring to escape from the toils that beset him.

A close survey of these matters must convince even the sceptical that M. Tillier is a modern Merlin in the net of a *fin de siècle* Vivien. He is constrained to paint the sensuous beauty of womanhood with an ardent appreciation of its charm. But his brush, which has been cunning in skill throughout the composition, suddenly enters a protest before the picture is finished. Hence we may discover in all his pictures a certain indication that Paul Tillier is not so wicked as his models would make him.

Observe the "Lady on the back of a Winged Lion." Wholly apart from her extraordinary resting-place, we find much that is interesting in this engaging young woman. How finely that torso is painted, how beautiful the head, how dainty the hands, how tempting the toes! But her calves and ankles lessen our good opinion of her, and render us indifferent to the wiles of one who plainly started out with the intention to make trouble in modest minds. By this sign we know that the painter desires to caution us against the blandishments of a female that is more alluring than trustworthy.



THE LADY IN THE BONNET

Here also is the "Lady in Tulle." If M. Tillier had not placed a warning in the pose and drawing of her hand, what disquietude might have been caused by



THE LADY WITH A BOOK

that fascinating face, those seductive eyes, those mobile lips, that filmy drapery which covers, but does not conceal, the throbbing bosom.

In the "Lady of the Lake" we find little to protect us against danger. Barring a falsehood, common enough among Frenchmen, in the refulgent lighting of the figure, this is a masterly stroke of painting. Yet if the sailors of Ulysses had been of sensitive, artistic nature, and had found themselves in danger of being enslaved by this sylvan Circe, they might have escaped peril by objecting to the foreshortening of her thigh and arm. The more we consider M. Tillier, the more we



THE LADY WITH THE ROSE

admire him. He is clearly on the side of decorum. No matter how sensual his models may be, he will not send them out to the world on canvas without some hint of imperfection which shall enable the public to maintain its equanimity.

Having happily escaped the "Lady of the Lake," we come to the "Lady with the Fan" without apprehension. Again we note a splendid power in the torso and

head. Nothing could be finer than the modelling of that flesh, except, perhaps, the subtle expression of *abandon* on the face. But the body is too short and there is insincerity in the hands; and after this disappointment we are warned against even such perfection as rests in the left foot.

The "Lady in the Bonnet" is not to be accepted complacently from a painter of such remarkable gifts. There is falsehood in this composition, and if this unnatural model insists on going in bathing with her bonnet on, it is to be hoped that she will come back with a new right arm.

Nor are we to be tempted by the "Lady with the Book." In spite of that sanctimonious face her thumbs are against her. Even M. Tillier was not deceived in this young person's effort to assume a virtue when she had it not. However good she intended to be, he has painted her badly, which proves that our Frenchman



THE LADY WITH THE CIGARETTE

abhors artifice, and will not suffer it to be imposed on the public under any pretence.

After this disappointing experience with a fair deceiver, the excellent M. Tillier returns to his studies of ladies with histories and gives us one of them with a rose. This is a spirited and graceful composition to which no photograph can do exact justice. The Rose lady's natural allurements are depicted in a most agreeable way, until the sense of M. Tillier's responsibility comes back in a false note in the lower drapery and the hands.

In the next picture the painter, remembering his unhappy adventure with a model who was compelled to study literature when her natural bent was toward different matters, goes to the other extreme in style. He starts out to be desperately wicked in a portrait of the "Lady with the Cigarette." Here, however, his ambition overleaps itself and falls on 'tother side. There is nothing in this canvas. It was of no benefit that M. Tillier hastened to warn us by clumsy drapery and impossible feet. The lady's nose and hands are hopelessly out of order, and she can smoke as much as she pleases without bringing offence to decorum.

This is a trick common enough among modern Frenchmen. Instances of it are frequently to be observed at the Salon; and even that enviable resting-place, the Luxembourg, is not free from it. Men like Bouguereau, Courtat, Dumoulin, Toulat, and others who have arrived at years of discretion, do not allow their keen sense of art to be warped by enthusiasms. If any particular of drapery, or limb, or feature of the model does not satisfy them they have immediate recourse to other poses, other sitters, and other arrangements of costume. The celebrated "Nymphé Endormie" of Dumoulin was composed from studies of various models. In his famous "Trois Grâces," Regnault used no less than sixteen models, and Cabanel's "Naissance de Venus" is a similar composite. Even Collin, in his delightful picture of the nude lady with the straw, which is one of the new glories of the Luxembourg, used three models, and might have studied double the number with advantage. An excellent example of the fault into which Paul Tillier has fallen is afforded by the "Venus" of Mercin, which was accepted at the Luxembourg only on account of its luminous and beautiful flesh, but which in drawing and pose remains a disgrace to that famous gallery.

If Paul Tillier thought less of his models and more of his art he could give a better account of his talent. He seems to become temporarily infatuated with a certain figure, and believes it to be perfect, not only in outline and modelling, but in the accidental folds of drapery. Age and experience generally cure such maladies as this. But in Paul Tillier's case the future is problematical. He paints as he sees, not as he thinks, but M. Tillier may eventually learn that the sensuous beauty which fascinates the artist is not always that which is in accordance with art.

From these matters we may see that Paul Tillier vacillates between greatness and mediocrity. He conceives everything but the honesty of womanhood, and carries out nothing except the fineness of flesh. He seems to be an example of the pernicious influence of models on one who is guided by their sensuousness rather than by his own inspiration.



THE LADY WITH THE FAN